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PROCESS OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY, WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF THE ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

REGIONAL APPROACH TO DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

Letter dated 22 April 1993 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission

I have the honour to refer to the Disarmament Commission's provisional agenda for the 1993 substantive session which has been circulated as document A/CN.10/L.32 dated 14 April 1993.

With specific reference to items No. 4 and 5 of the provisional agenda, entitled "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons" and "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security", I wish to bring to your attention a number of developments in South Africa both in regard to nuclear weapons and in regard to disarmament in general.

South African President F. W. de Klerk's commitment towards pursuing a peaceful, negotiated political settlement in South Africa has made it possible for South Africa to take substantial steps towards lessening tensions in southern Africa. South Africa has implemented a number of far-reaching measures that clearly demonstrate its resolve to promote the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. South Africa desires the establishment in Africa of a zone free of nuclear weapons. This could, by extension, encompass a zone free of chemical and biological weapons. South Africa is ready to cooperate with like-minded States in the region and beyond, to achieve this objective. It has already shown its resolve in unilaterally taking substantial steps.

South Africa is aware of the relationship between global and regional disarmament and, while seeking to discharge its global disarmament obligations, will inevitably direct a significant portion of its contribution towards achieving peace, stability and socio-economic progress in southern Africa.

The South African Government acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on 10 July 1991 and entered into a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency on 16 September 1991 in record time. Since its accession to the NPT, South Africa has cooperated fully with the IAEA and has strictly adhered to the conditions of the NPT. This policy of transparency and professional cooperation with the IAEA remains in force, as evidenced by the recent invitation by President F. W. de Klerk to the IAEA to undertake a further inspection visit to South Africa in connection with South Africa's past nuclear weapons programme.

On 24 March 1993, President de Klerk, before a joint session of Parliament, provided full information on that programme despite the fact that the NPT does not require this. The State President confirmed that South Africa had at one stage developed a limited nuclear deterrent capability but had subsequently dismantled and destroyed all the nuclear devices before acceding to the NPT. In his speech he emphasized the following:

> "South Africa's hands are clean and we are concealing nothing. Permission has now been granted by the Government, with a view to international inspection, for full access to facilities and records of facilities, which in the past were used for the preparation of a nuclear deterrent capability.
>
> I sincerely trust that this unprecedented act, namely the voluntary dismantling of a nuclear deterrent capability and the voluntary revelation of all relevant information will confirm this Government's effort to assure transparency. I trust also that South Africa's initiative will inspire other countries to take the same steps."

In addition to South Africa's accession to the NPT, South Africa has also become a member of the African Regional Cooperative Agreement (AFRA), an organization within the IAEA which coordinates peaceful, nuclear projects and cooperation between African States in the nuclear field. South Africa's advanced nuclear technology base and nuclear industry constitute an asset not only for South Africa but for our neighbouring States and Africa as a whole.

South Africa has set an example for the world in providing greater transparency in nuclear matters and believes that this example should be followed by other nuclear or potential nuclear States in the interest of world peace.

By signing the Chemical Weapons Convention in Paris on 14 January 1993, South Africa demonstrated further its commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament. At the time, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa, welcomed the enthusiastic support which this important multilateral agreement received from our fellow African countries and pledged South Africa's support for any initiatives aimed at making Africa the first continent to be declared free of all weapons of mass destruction.

South Africa seeks to promote peace and good-neighbourliness in southern Africa in the conviction that the military threat to the southern African region has abated. With the growing acceptance that the resort to armed force and violence is not the solution to regional problems, South Africa has been able to significantly reduce its military budget. South Africa associates itself with the international consensus that disarmament is a global priority area and contributes fundamentally to ensuring international peace and security. South Africa has therefore adopted a policy of directing its resources away from military expenditure towards far more pressing economic and social needs.

I should be grateful if this letter could be circulated as an official document of the Disarmament Commission.

(Signed) V. R. W. STEWARD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative